

## 5-3 Planning for Quarterly Nutrition Education

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### The quarterly nutrition education cycle

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Nutrition-focused counseling provided at the certification appointment is just the beginning of the nutrition education cycle the participant will benefit from during their certification period. You will be responsible for working with the participant or caregiver to plan nutrition education the participant receives quarterly. Making any behavior change can be hard. Nutrition education is the service WIC provides that can support the change the participant wants to make.



### Why quarterly nutrition education?

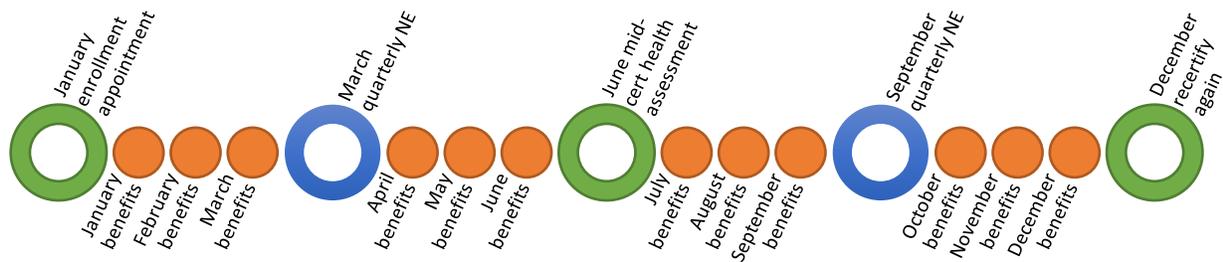
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When a participant is working on making a change, frequent support and checking in helps. That is why participants need to be offered some type of nutrition education every 3 months, which is the reason it is called “quarterly” nutrition education. This

usually lines up with benefit issuance, since benefits can only be issued for up to 3 months at a time.

If the certification period is for one year, one of the quarterly nutrition education opportunities will be provided when the participant is seen for a mid-certification health assessment with a certifier. This appointment is very similar to an enrollment appointment and gives us an opportunity to check-in individually and in person.

**Example of quarterly nutrition education and benefit issuance:**



Learning activity

Use the case study to plan when quarterly nutrition education and food benefit issuance would happen for this participant.



**Case study**

You are certifying Arla, a woman who is 3 months pregnant. Her certification period begins this month (January) and ends 2 months after her delivery date (September).

Month		Nutrition education and benefit issuance plan
January	Certification period starts	
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July	Baby due	
August		
September	Certification period ends – recertify	

## Quarterly nutrition education options

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To offer the best support to participants, you will need to be familiar with the quarterly nutrition education options available in your agency. Nutrition education activities vary by agency. Local agencies choose which of the options below work for their participants.

There are 3 basic types of nutrition education contacts – individual, groups, or self-guided.

### Individual nutrition education includes:

- One-to-one counseling scheduled with and provided by a certifier;
  - Examples – A low-risk participant is scheduled to have their weight checked and discuss their next steps with a certifier; a breastfeeding mom with questions about latching is scheduled to see your IBCLC.
- High-risk counseling scheduled with and provided by a WIC nutritionist.
  - Example – A high-risk participant is scheduled to follow-up with your agency dietitian



### Group nutrition education includes:

- Group “classes” focused on one topic facilitated by WIC staff;
  - Examples – infant feeding, prenatal nutrition, or family meal time classes are offered each month
- Support groups where participants with a common interest or from the same category talk with each other;
  - Example – breastfeeding support groups offered weekly in your agency
- Health fairs where several options of activities are available for the participants to select and complete at their own pace;
  - Example – WIC staff are available at 3 or 4 interactive displays on seasonal topics and participants can attend anytime during a 3-hour time period each month
- Nutrition education groups are provided by a partner and WIC participants can attend;
  - Example – Your agency has an arrangement with Head Start or SNAP-Ed for participants that participate in those programs to attend nutrition classes there instead of at WIC



**Self-guided nutrition education includes:**

- Online nutrition lessons from an approved provider on the internet;
  - Example – a low risk participant selects an online nutrition lesson from the available list
- Self-paced lessons provided when the participant has been unable to participate in one of the other nutrition education options.
  - Example – a participant who missed the group class they were scheduled for completes a self-paced lesson while in your office so they can be issued food benefits.



Learning activity

Talk with your training supervisor about the nutrition education options available in your agency and make note of when they are offered and how to schedule participants to join.

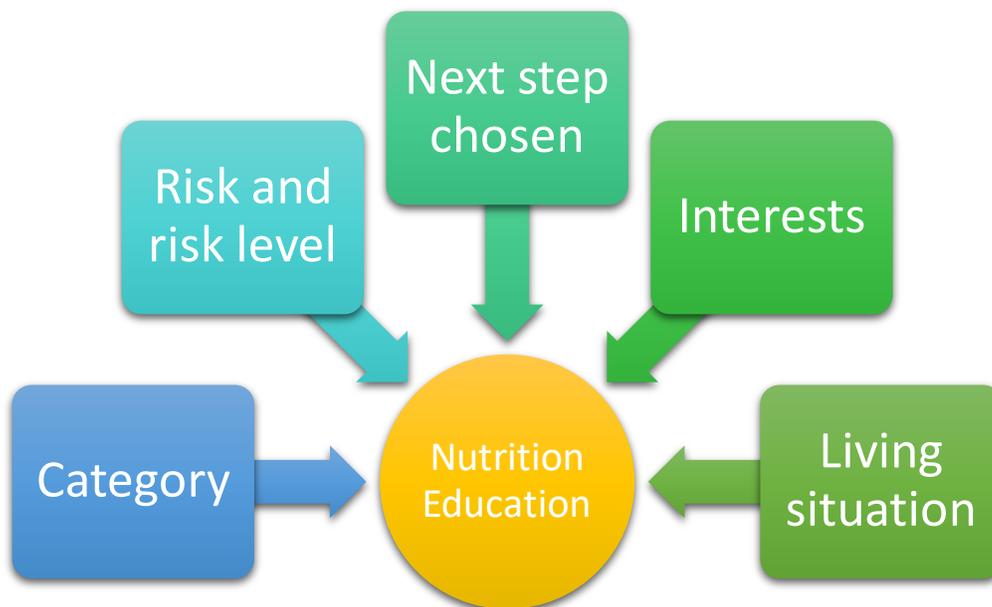


Type of Nutrition Ed	Available?	Scheduling
One-to-one counseling		
High-risk counseling		
Group classes		
Support groups		
Health fairs		
Partner provided		
Online classes		
Self-paced lessons		

## Matching the needs of the participant to nutrition education options

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When planning nutrition education, you will match what is happening with the participant to what nutrition education options are available in your agency. To be most effective the nutrition education needs to meet the category, risk level, interests, and living situation of the participant. It is helpful to offer a participant a menu of nutrition education options to choose from if they are available. This increases the chance they can select one that meets their needs and situation.



### Considerations and examples:

- The participant's category;
  - Example - If the participant is an infant you might schedule them for an introduction to solids class. You would not schedule them for a prenatal nutrition class.
- The participant's nutrition risk factors and risk level;
  - Example – If the participant is high-risk you would schedule them to see the WIC nutritionist. You would not schedule them for a group class.
- The “next step” selected by the participant or caregiver;
  - Example – If the caregiver has chosen a next step to wean their baby off the bottle by 1 year old, you might schedule them into a toddler feeding or a weaning class.
- The interests of the participant or caregiver;
  - Example – If the participant is really interested in learning how to prepare dried beans, you might schedule them into a legumes class.
- The participant's or caregiver's living situation.

- Example – The caregiver works during the day but does have a Smartphone, so you might offer an online nutrition education lesson.

## Learning activity



Use the information you gathered about what nutrition education options are available in your agency and identify which would match the needs of each of the participants described below.

Participant	Nutrition education option
Jill, a pregnant woman who has gestational diabetes and is high-risk.	
Jacqui, a breastfeeding mom who is planning on returning to work and wants to pump her breast milk.	
Jamal, an active 3-year old, his mom wants him to eat more fruits and veggies.	
Jessica has 2 low-risk children on WIC and is working full-time.	

## Coordinating benefit issuance and nutrition education

We want participants to always have their food benefits available. The best way to do this is to schedule their nutrition education for the last month they have benefits issued. This usually works out well with the quarterly nutrition education requirement, but you may need to adjust the number of months of benefits issued or the month nutrition education is offered to ensure participants always have benefits through the month of their next visit. You can schedule nutrition education in 1, 2 or 3 months, as long as nutrition education is scheduled some time during the 3-month period.

### Considerations:

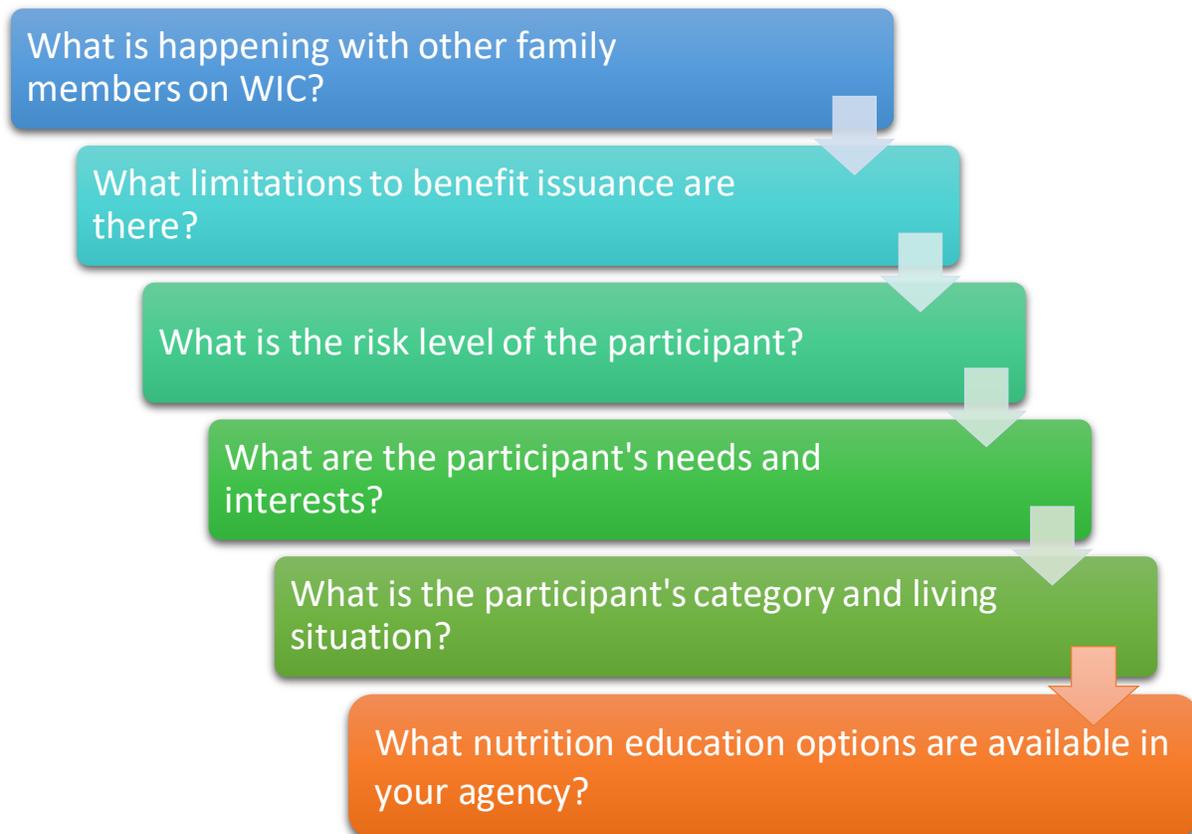
- Participants who can only be issued one month of benefits because they need to bring in documentation of proofs or paperwork for special formulas.
  - Example – A participant needs a medical documentation form, completed by the doctor, to get more special formula benefits issued. Scheduling them to see the WIC nutritionist next month gives them the chance to complete their quarterly nutrition education, their high-risk visit, and an opportunity to bring in the form all in one visit.

- Participants who have other family members on WIC may have different benefit issuance and nutrition education schedules.
  - Example – You enroll a pregnant woman who already has 2 children on WIC. You would try to schedule nutrition education for mom in the same month as she is scheduled for her 2 children. Mom could choose a nutrition education option that would be appropriate for all 3 family members. That way she only needs to complete one nutrition education activity, rather than 3 different ones.

## Critical thinking when planning nutrition education

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Planning quarterly nutrition education takes critical thinking. You will make a series of decisions based on what you know about the participant.



## Learning activity

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In the case study below, use critical thinking to circle the information you would need to consider when planning quarterly nutrition education for the family.



## Case study

You just enrolled Kenzie for her new pregnancy. She is 3 months pregnant and is planning to breastfeed her baby when it is born. Kenzie's other child Brant, is a 2-year old who was certified 3 months ago. Brant is healthy but is a little on the slim side.

Based on what you know about Kenzie and Brant and the nutrition education options available in your agency, what nutrition education would you schedule next?

What other quarterly nutrition education would you plan for Kenzie and Brant for the rest of their certification periods?

## Updating participant nutrition education plans

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Lots can happen during a year-long certification. As a certifier you will update the quarterly nutrition education plans for participants as needed during the certification period.

### Situations when updates are needed:

- You get new information;
  - Example – During the mid-certification health assessment appointment you complete an assessment and get information that was not noted in the participant's record (e.g. a new risk factor, a change in living situation). You document what you learned and update the nutrition education plan accordingly.
- Food package changes;
  - Example – A caregiver brings in a form showing that the doctor has put their child on a special formula. You need to consider the reason they need a different formula and if there is a new risk or risk level. You may need to schedule them to see the WIC nutritionist.
- Category changes;
  - Example – A mom stops breastfeeding, so you change her from a breastfeeding support group to another class.
- Change in living situation;
  - Example – A caregiver returns to work full time and cannot attend a class, so you schedule them to take an online lesson and call in when it is completed.

- Missed scheduled nutrition education;
  - Example – A caregiver misses their scheduled class, so you issue one month of benefits and reschedule them to attend nutrition education the next month.

## Refusal of nutrition education

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Nutrition education is an important benefit of being on WIC, so we highlight the reasons to attend to participants. On rare occasions a participant will be unable or unwilling to participate in any of the available nutrition education options you offer at certification. We cannot refuse to provide benefits to a participant if they do not complete nutrition education, so in this situation you would arrange for benefit issuance.

Refusing all nutrition education options at the certification appointment is different than a participant missing scheduled nutrition education and refusing to reschedule. In that situation, you would issue one month of benefits and then try to reschedule, either for the next month or for a different nutrition education option.

### **Steps to handle refusal of nutrition education at certification:**

1. Explore the reason the participant is refusing to see if you can find a solution.
2. Offer a variety of options, including self-guided nutrition education.
3. Document the refusal and the reason in the participant's record.
4. Schedule times for the participant to contact us for benefit issuance.

## Learning activity

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Observe a certifier planning quarterly nutrition education for a family.

What did you notice?

Ask the certifier to explain their critical thinking process for why they made the suggestions that they did.

## Talk it over

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Talk with your training supervisor about any questions you have related to quarterly nutrition education plans.

What is your agency's process for rescheduling participants that miss their scheduled nutrition education?

Where do you document a participant's refusal of nutrition education?

## References

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[Oregon WIC Policy 810 – Nutrition-focused Education and Counseling](#)  
[Oregon WIC Policy 820 – Quarterly Nutrition Education Contacts](#)